

# **SUMMARY OF 2<sup>ND</sup> FREIGHT RAIL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

## **Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan Update**

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### **Meeting Time and Location**

The second Freight Rail Advisory Council meeting for the *Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan Update* was held on February 20, 2002 at the Radisson Hotel in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

### **Meeting Attendees**

The following persons attended the meeting:

#### **Consultant Team Members**

Justin Fox, Wilbur Smith Associates  
Chris Chritton, Wilbur Smith Associates  
Butch Babineaux, Wilbur Smith Associates

#### **Council Members**

Carl Broussard, Louisiana & Delta Railroad  
Brian Parsons, LDOTD  
Bill Wainright, Delta Southern Railroad  
Paul Zimmermann, Port of New Orleans

#### **Non-Member DOTD Staff**

Dan Broussard, LDOTD  
Tom Bartkiewicz, LDOTD  
Bill Shrewsberry, LDOTD

#### **Other Attendees**

Dale Walsh, Rubicon  
Karen Kavanagh, URS Corp.  
Glenda Jeansonne, LA Airport Authority  
Tom Lobello, New Orleans Public Belt RR

### **Meeting Purpose**

The purpose of this meeting was to provide Freight Rail Council members with a review of the status of the update to the *Statewide Intermodal Transportation Plan (SITP)*, provided by Butch Babineaux, and an update of the Statewide Rail Plan, provided by Justin Fox. The update of the Statewide Rail Plan included an overview of plan components, a summary of technical analyses and results, major issues identified in the

plan and recommendations. The next steps in the State Rail Plan were identified at the conclusion of the meeting.

### **Summary of Meeting Comments**

Louisiana is more interested than ever before in railroads.

LDOT needs to “go to bat” for railroads. What does advocacy mean? LDOTD should be calling railroads to let them know shipper needs.

Be specific about how helping railroads will help highways.

Scheduled rail services are improving service to shippers

The relationship between LDOTD and economic development for marketing short lines should be developed.

The state doesn't have dollars to match federal funds. Therefore, the state needs to go to railroads to get matching dollars.

What are ways to have freight railroad improvements be part of highway or passenger rail improvements?

Show that improving rail congestion operations will reduce truck traffic, thus reducing highway maintenance costs.

A Joint Louisiana / Mississippi dispatching center would alleviate the need for another rail crossing over the Mississippi River.

Concern over the “286 issue,” (heavier, 286,000-lb. rail cars traveling over inadequate track) was confirmed by short line representatives.

Bill Shrewsberry, LDOTD, expressed concern over some of the recommendations expanding role of railroad program to include shipper advocacy, i.e., should LDOTD or Department of Economic Development be responsible?

There is a state law to “assist railroads,” but no associated funding.

The scarcity of responses from shippers served by short lines concerned members of the Council. Most responses were from shippers served by Class 1 Railroads.

4 of 9 recommendations deal with funding sources. Does improvement in Economic Development/LDOTD communication need to be a recommendation?

Brian Parsons, LDOTD noted that some type of state funding, to provide matching of federal funds, is needed.

Brian Parsons said the key is intermodalism. Also, the state's congressmen need to know the state's rail needs.

Congestion of rail traffic in New Orleans is related to bottlenecks at terminals, not at the Huey P. Long Bridge.

Bill Shrewsberry, LDOTD, said high-speed rail service at 90 mph or more helps passenger and freight rail service.

**Next Steps**

It was noted that copies of Draft Rail Plan Report will be distributed for review by the Advisory Council, then placed on the plan update website for public viewing.